

FACT SHEET

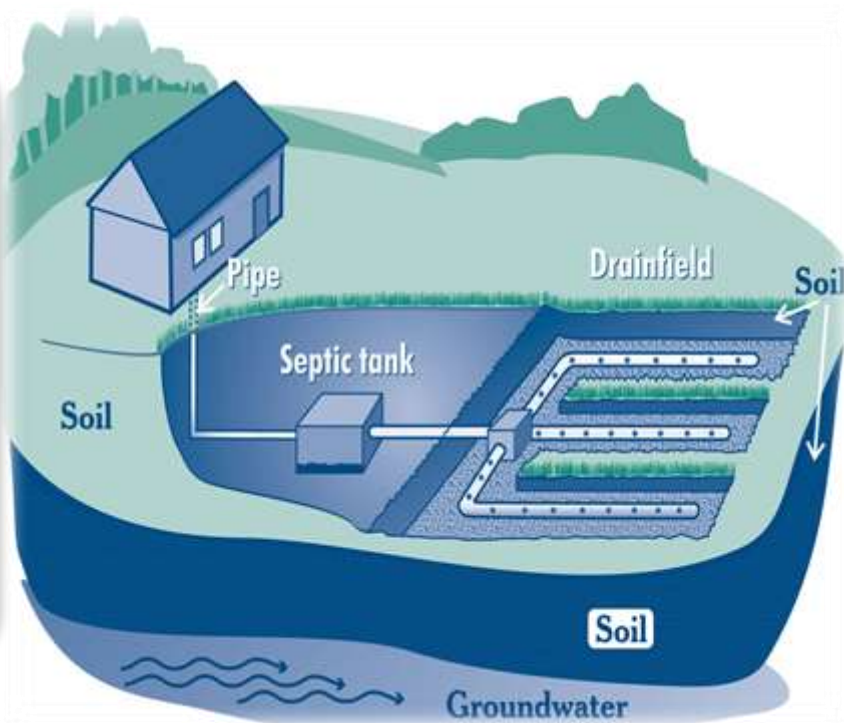
Onsite Sewage Disposal Systems

Thousands of Howard County residents have sewage disposal (septic) systems to treat and dispose of home wastewater. A septic system has two parts: a septic tank and a drainfield. Sewage flows from the home via piping into the septic tank, where bacteria break down the solid materials and nutrients.

Septic systems that do not work properly can transmit disease and harm the environment.

Problems May Arise If:

- Poor drainage causes the drainfield to become waterlogged
- Water overloads the system
- Grease or solids clog the drainfield
- Tree roots infiltrate the system



Signs of Problems:

- Sewage odor near the septic tank or drainage area
- Slow-running drains and toilets
- Sewage on the ground

Prevent Problems with Good Maintenance:

- Have the tank inspected and pumped at least once every three years to avoid solids buildup.
- Know where the septic system is located and make a sketch of the area.
- Keep trees and shrubs away from the drainage system.
- Keep heavy equipment and vehicles off the drainage system.
- Properly dispose of pesticides, paint thinner, and other chemicals - don't pour them down the toilet or drain.
- Avoid using septic system additives.
- Keep garbage, grease, flushable wipes, sanitary pads, tampons, cigarettes, disposable diapers, and other objects out of the septic system.
- Avoid doing a large amount of laundry in one day.
- Conserve water when using showers, dishwashers, sinks, bath tubs and toilets.

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Do You have a BAT Unit? Additional Information

Pretreatment tanks using Best Available Technology (BAT units) for Nitrogen reduction are installed in some systems as a replacement to traditional septic tanks. These units require special and more frequent maintenance.

- All BAT units must be serviced at least once a year by a service provider certified by both the Maryland Department of the Environment and the unit manufacturer.
- All BAT units have an electrical motor providing aeration and recirculation within the tank that must always be operational. Otherwise, the unit will not provide the proper treatment and may lead to backups from the tank or inside the house.
- Many BAT units have a blower motor component that sits above the ground. This unit must remain unobstructed for the motor to properly operate.
- Odors of sewage around the BAT unit are a sign of malfunction. A BAT unit should have no odor or a slight odor of fresh compost. If a sewage odor is present, a maintenance visit from a certified service provider is necessary.
- Avoid dumping chemicals of any kind, including septic system additives down the drain.
- Avoid sending water treatment system backwash through the BAT unit. This backwash must be sent to the sewage disposal system. A septic permit issued by the Health Department is required for this connection.

Septic Saver Program

Clean Water Howard has implemented a Septic Saver Program that can reimburse homeowners up to \$100 for pumping out their septic tank once every 3-5 years. Visit the Septic Saver Website for details:

<http://www.cleanwaterhoward.com/what-is-your-role/residential-properties/septicsavers>

For More Information:

Howard County Health Department Well and Septic Program - 410-313-1771

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Health/Environmental-Health/Well-and-Septic>

<http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Water/BayRestorationFund/OnsiteDisposalSystems/Pages/OnsiteSystems.aspx>